FROM IMAGINED COMMUNITIES TO CULTURES OF COLLECTIVIZATION:
COLLECTIVE CONCEPTS BETWEEN PRAXEOLOGY AND THEORIES ON
SCHEMATA AND FRAMES

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From Imagined Communities to Cultures of Collectivization: Collective Concepts between Praxeology and Theories on Schemata and Frames[1]

_Abstract

This _Essay contributes to the issue of On Culture by asking how concepts like frame or schema could be used to analyze collectivity. It takes on a praxeological perspective which does not presuppose collectivities as given entities but as something that emerges from what we do: doing group, family, gender, nation. Part of these practices is an implicit and incorporated understanding or knowledge (i.e., culture) what it is that we are doing, how to collectivize and what for. These collectivization cultures—a conceptual extension of Benedict Anderson's imagined communities—can be analyzed as consisting of frames or schemata. The _Essay draws on cognitive theories to distinguish collectivization scripts (e.g., frames of assembling, having dinner together) and collectivization themes (e.g., stereotypes, models of families, enterprises, nations). These again are interrelated, as are practices and practitioners, who carry collectivization experiences from one practice to another and frame nations as extended families or work teams as friendship circles.

1_Introduction: Beyond "Imagined Communities"

The term 'collectivization cultures' obviously links collectivity and culture, prompting two simplified theses regarding this connection: the first is that culture is produced in or by collectivities. Thus, research from the fields of symbolic interactionism or cultural studies shows that cultures emerge in small groups or youth scenes. I do not deny the importance of this thesis. However, it tends to neglect the notion that collectivities are not simply there and produce culture, but are themselves cultural products. This is the second thesis: collectivities are something cultural, products and objects of collectivization cultures.

But what is interesting about collectivization cultures? And what does it have to do with frames? Probably the most famous example of a collectivization culture concept is Benedict Anderson's "imagined community."[2] It also illustrates the relevance of the topic: the idea of dividing people into nations and making this collectivization the basis of state legitimation has been so successful that many people can hardly imagine the world any other way.[3] The view that takes the world as consisting of nations and people with nationalities can be itself regarded as a frame, a cognitive schema that helps make sense of world. However, the idea that nourishes the nation frame first had to be formed, established and spread. People who were bound through

clan, location (village), social status or faith had to learn to identify with people who lived far away in unfamiliar places under unfamiliar circumstances, belonged to different classes, people with distinct looks, ways of speaking and of another confession. In essence, their framework of identification had to change fundamentally. For that to happen, profound transformation had to occur: people's understanding—again, their frames—of space and time had to change; which was in turn made possible, for example, by new narrative techniques in novels. This depended on the spread of new media such as books and newspapers, which required technological innovations (printing) and economic transformations (print capitalism), as well as political and bureaucratic developments (the introduction of administrative languages). Thus, on the one hand Anderson cites centuries of macro-processes as factors in the emergence of the idea of the nation. On the other hand, he refers to very specific places (e.g., military cemeteries, museums) and artefacts (e.g., maps) that make it imaginable. And he speculates about the cognitive processes that enable and accompany concrete practices: e.g., reading the newspaper could have come with an implicit awareness that there must be an anonymous crowd of other readers in addition to oneself who are informing themselves about the same events at the same moment in the same language.

Fascinating as Anderson's book is, it does not provide a systematic conception of imagined communities. In essence, he merely asserts that all collectivities that are not essentially based on face-to-face communication (such as families, circles of friends, neighborhoods) should be regarded as imagined communities. Therefore, I would like to approach the conceptualization of imagined communities in general. Contrary to Anderson, I will argue that *all kinds of collectivities* are imagined communities as they are all founded in ideas. However, I maintain fidelity to Anderson in a crucial respect: as illustrated by his examples of reading newspapers or visiting cemeteries, he does not treat imagined communities as entities populating a detached sphere of ideas. Rather, Anderson can be understood as linking them to practices, places, and artefacts. This kind of thinking can best be captured by praxeological approaches.[4] They underscore the materiality of human activities while conceiving practices as being shaped by corresponding knowledge (i.e., culture), particularly implicit knowledge consisting of schemata/frames. Therefore, I am going to understand

collectivity as something we practice based upon knowledge/culture about how to perform that very practice.

The topic is complex for three reasons: Firstly, many forms of collectivity can be distinguished (Germans, women, families, work teams, business enterprises, authorities, social movements, nation states, etc.). Secondly, people always belong to several of these collectivities (multicollectivity). This is one explanation, why, thirdly, people mix collectivizing practices and cultures: as not only Anderson has emphasized, many people imagine the abstract macro-collectivity 'nation' as warm, tight-knit micro-community, that is, as their extended family.

My _*Essay* both relies on research of schemata/frames and contributes to it. On the one hand, I will draw on such research in order to better grasp and analyze the otherwise very abstract concepts of knowledge/culture or imagined community. On the other hand, as far as I can see, research on collectivity as schemata/frame content has been limited to two primary domains: stereotypes (e.g., gender, race) and strategic framing in social movement research. I propose to extend it to all kinds of collectivities.

In section 2, I explain why I choose the praxeological approach and where I systematically locate knowledge/culture. Then, in section 3, I outline the praxeological concept of knowledge/culture and analyze it with the help of theories of schemata/frames. In the last section, I tentatively apply the insights gained to collectivity and distinguish between entangled collectivity scripts and themes.

2_Thinking Collectivity Praxeologically

Why should we think collectivity praxeologically? To take a short detour: the British band Oasis was recently rumored to be reuniting. This presupposes that they formed and then disbanded at some point. Fans would also be able to speak about the musical development of the band members, the tours they held, their successes as well as about internal conflicts and scandals surrounding them. Collectivities are thus founded and maintained by the activities of actors, they change, they dissolve (and sometimes reform). However, these easily comprehensible observations are linguistically contradicted by the fact that we treat collectivities as fixed entities that travel through time, have interests, make decisions and act. FC Bayern Munich buys a player, a family moves house, or the UK leaves the EU.

What is allowed in everyday language can be epistemologically problematic in academia. This is the core of the critique of reification.[5] This critique is directed towards the academic use of collective terms (e.g., 'nation,' 'society,' 'organization,' 'group,' 'community'), insofar this use implies that the phenomena thus designated are fixed, well-bounded and internally integrated (or even homogeneous) entities that may even decide and act in a manner analogous to individual subjects. The utilization of collective terms in this manner overlooks the inherent processuality of collectivity, its constructed nature, mutability, transience, its openness and heterogeneity.

Such reification can be avoided by applying the principles and the vocabulary of certain theories, for example action theories, practice theories, network theories or systems theories. In my _*Essay*, I would like to advance the approach taken by practice theories[6] for two reasons: firstly, the field of collectivity has not yet been systematically cultivated by practice theories. Secondly, these theories capture, among else, the nexus of materiality and knowledge (see section 1) because they have emerged from many fundamental discussions in social and cultural theory and are compatible with many of the recent so-called turns (e.g., body turn, affective turn, spatial turn). In order to take account of this diversity of perspectives, I employ a multidimensional concept of practice.[7] I understand practice as a patterned nexus of activities, and I conceive of these activities as having numerous and—important— interrelated dimensions: body, things and artefacts, affectivity, discursivity, normativity, subjectivation, performativity, and, last but not least, a collectivizing and cultural dimension. This _*Essay* focuses on the last two. 'Collectivizing' refers to the tendency for practices to engender both commonalities and differences; in short, they draw boundaries. This happens through the use of categories such as 'Germans,' 'women,' 'working class;' or through interactive togetherness, such as playing soccer, having dinner with the family, running an office workshop. Finally, practice involves a cultural dimension, which is to say the production of meaning and use of knowledge. This is where schemata/frames come into play.

3_Praxeological Concepts of Knowledge and Schema Theories

Collectivity is thus something that we practice, and this practice is constituted by corresponding knowledge/culture. In this section, I outline what I mean by practice knowledge/culture. I begin with an examination of the practice-theoretical program,

and draw on the theory of cognitive schemata/frames for concretization. I conclude with reflections on the acquisition of knowledge/culture.

According to Andreas Reckwitz, one of the most important positions of praxeological approaches is to see social life as being constituted by an implicit and informal logic.[8] I will characterize the program of this praxeological concept of knowledge/culture with *eight* thoughts:[9] (1) It is about relevance for action: knowledge is used in the execution of activities (not before them) and shapes them. (2) This action knowledge is not primarily explicit 'knowing that' (e.g., Regensburg is a city), but rather implicit 'knowing how' (e.g., tying shoes) which hardly requires awareness. (3) Knowledge should not be conceptualized as purely mental or intellectual, in the sense of a mind-body dichotomy. Knowledge is physical ability. Riding a bicycle, playing the piano and the like cannot be exhaustively explicated in words. They are learnt and known by doing. (4) Such implicit knowledge is procedural and complex. It includes entire situations (sequences), as in the case of a restaurant visit, meetings, supermarket shopping, etc. (5) This knowledge essentially operates in the mind's background. I may think hard about what I want to eat for dinner and have to shop for it, but I do not have to think about how to shop. (6) Many practice theories do not locate knowledge in individual actors, but in practices that are collective phenomena. Practice theories thus decenter the subject. People are not pre-practical entities that produce activities and meaning prior to practice. Rather, they are constantly involved in practices that subjectivize them (see below). (7) Practice-theoretical concepts of knowledge are critically directed against the idea of people as rational actors following interests, norms and values. For practice theories, people only think and act like rational actors, if at all, in exceptional cases. Concepts such as Bourdieu's strategy indicate that goals, plans and rules are also something specific to practice that we incorporate and routinely apply without any need for introspection. (8) What can be used to grasp implicit knowledge/culture are concepts like schemata, frames or *Deutungsmuster*.[10]

In order to theorize such concepts within a praxeological framework a variety of approaches can be employed. Reckwitz mentions Goffman's frame analysis and Schuetz' *Deutungsmuster*, but holds Bourdieu's habitus concept to be more refined. Furthermore, Reckwitz also draws upon schema theories from cognitive anthropology, which is linked to schema research, for example in psychology, to

explain the meaning patterns of practices as complex interlinked systems of schemata.[11] I will follow this lead since it represents an entire research tradition part of which is e.g. Minsky's frame theory. There are parallels to praxeological concepts like Bourdieu's habitus: at one point, he writes that the habitus is a system of "schemata of perception, evaluation and action [which] enable practical acts of cognition to be carried out."[12] Both Bourdieu and schema theorists can be said to understand schemata as pre-configured yet flexible structures, which can be applied to a variety of situations, combined with each other and modified. However, the parallels between practice and schema theories should not be overstated. Bourdieu, for example, places much more emphasis on the physical dimension of the habitus, a facet that is less pronounced in schema theories. Additionally, schema theories situate schemata within the individual actor, whereas habitus is regarded as something collective.

Keeping these differences in mind, two considerations from schema theories seem particularly fruitful to me:[13] firstly, ever since Jean Piaget's studies in developmental psychology, schema theories model different levels of abstraction and complexity. Schematized knowledge refers to pre-conceptual sensorimotor coordination (e.g., holding cutlery and bringing it to the mouth) or the simple recognition and naming of objects (e.g., spoon, tree). Above this level, cognitive schemata/frames are thought of as situation-specific scripts, for example, how to do the supermarket shopping or go to a restaurant. This means that people have routine knowledge about the premises, artefacts (e.g., tables, menus), what to do in which sequence (e.g., ordering, drinks, food, paying), what to expect from persons at the venue (e.g. waiters), behavior and interaction with them, as well as other sensory impressions (e.g., food smells). At the same time, scripts are more complex as they obviously include sensorimotor and object recognition schemes. More abstract still are so-called goal and plan schemata, which make it possible to deduce what goals people have in certain situations and constellations, and the means with which to realize them. In this way, the rational actor could be partially incorporated into schema theories. So-called themes or cultural models are even more abstract. Examples of these are illness, marriage, property, or role themes, which contain implicit expectations regarding actor categories (e.g., mothers, doctors). Finally, there are also schemata/frames for dealing with diversity, called cultural meta-models. The most prominent example of these are

stereotypes about ethnonational differences. As schemata/frames become more abstract, they are acquired less through repeated personal experience of the thing itself and more through linguistic mediation (e.g., through media consumption).

Secondly, schema theories provide us with insights into the activation, differentiation, and combination of knowledge structures. If several experiences (or sensory impressions) occur regularly together, people who have one of these experiences will expect to have the others, too. Among other things, this enables the inference of a whole from its constituent elements: I can recognize a restaurant just by looking through the window without having to go through the rest of the visit. At the same time, I can differentiate my schema repertoire by making different experiences. Frequent visits to Italian, Chilean, Japanese, simple, fast-food, but also fine dining establishments will contribute the diversification of my restaurant script. I might thus no longer expect my order to be taken at the table in fast-food restaurants. Recognition and differentiation are also intricately linked with integrating schemata into networks: because they enable me to routinely recognize (and adjust to) both similarities and differences between sushi bars and pizzerias. And to bring in collectivity: sharing a meal is a collectivizing practice which entails—among else— sitting together, eating and conversation. Sharing a meal connects different variations of eating scenarios: at home with the family, as a guest with friends or with colleagues in a restaurant. People also sit together and talk in meetings, which makes it possible to combine meetings with sharing a meal.

Schemata/frames are primarily acquired through repeated experiences, including the repeated reception of linguistic or media content. This resonates with the praxeological principle of how knowledge is acquired: through learning by doing, i.e., by participating in practices. In the multidimensional practice model, this can be analyzed primarily via the dimension of subjectivation.[14] Subjectivation in practice means that its exercise has an effect on participants. In the case of one-off or infrequent participation, this effect is likely to remain superficial, whereas in the case of repeated (and perhaps even passionate) practice performance, it deepens and may become important for the actor's self-image. It is reasonable to modify the classical concept of subjectivation as understood by the early Michel Foucault or Judith Butler in three respects. Firstly, subjectivation can be conceived of less in a structuralist way, but rather be traced, like ethnomethodologically oriented praxeologists do, in

concrete situations. Secondly, classical concepts of subjectivation put an emphasis on discipline. Participation in practice, then, would discipline participants, i.e., they learn what they are doing right or wrong through the critical interventions of other practice participants (normative dimension). However, participants are also enabled or empowered and thus successively acquire the capacity and disposition to act. The third modification is collectivity-specific. Even if collectivities (families, schools, prisons, psychiatric wards) have a subjectivizing effect, they must not be taken for granted as classical subjectivation theories do. Collectivities need to be thought of as produced (and possibly subjectivized), too, so that subjectivation processes become a mutually constitutive matter.[15]

4_Cultures of Collectivization

In this section, I apply the considerations on knowledge/culture and its constituting elements (schemata/frames) to collectivity. It is important to consider the diversity of forms of collectivity, such as human categories (workers or women), smaller groups (like family, friendship circles, work teams), organizations (clubs, companies), social movements, nations. Each form of collectivity involves distinct practices for its (re-)production, which is to say different kinds of knowledge. To gain analytical access to this diversity of knowledge, I distinguish between two basic forms of collectivization cultures in sections 4.1 and 2. It becomes clear that different forms of collectivity, the practices that constitute them and the corresponding knowledge are entangled (see section 4.3). I try to do justice to schema theories by frequently adopting an individual actor or knowledge acquisition perspective on the one hand, while at the same time including practice theories by locating knowledge in practice on the other.

4.1_Collectivization Scripts

Collectivities are not single movements or objects (though they can be represented by objects; for example flags), but rather complex processes, for which reason, the focus will not be on the simplest schemata (sensorimotor, object recognition, etc.). With regard to knowledge how to collectivize, scripts are ontogenetically at the beginning. Put simply: a child experiences its family before it can use a concept of family and acquires a theme of 'family.' It experiences togetherness, which contains many aspects that are important for the scripts of various collectivity practices: caring for

others, sharing space, time and other resources, gathering for meals, conversing, arguing and deciding together about what concerns everyone (although not in a democratic way, as it is the parents who decide when the children are young). At the same time, there is always an inherent construction of commonality and difference. As children mature, they understand that togetherness also extends to other people (playmates, more distant relatives), but that there are differences, because these people do not care to the same extent or do not stay overnight.

These repetitive processes contain schematized, procedural script knowledge about collectivity. In late modern contexts, children in daycare centers would experience practices of togetherness that are both similar and different to familial ones. On the one hand, space, time, things and artefacts are shared again, people gather for meals again, converse, argue and make decisions (again with greater adult participation). On the other hand, many children—what is historically perhaps the first time—spend a lot of their time with their peers, and therefore experience more symmetrical relationships. If there are different groups in daycare centers, a symbolic representation is often added: for example, a giraffe or squirrel group. This functions as a collective name and, to a certain extent, as a (weak) analog to Durkheim's totem. When it is made the object of small collective rituals, it becomes part of scripts.

At school, certain experiences from daycare are repeated, others are new. There are now performance aspects to collectivity, an emphasis on the official goal of togetherness (education) and maybe the first elements of representation (class speakers) including the associated elections. Children acquire classroom lesson scripts, group works scripts, and elections scripts. When children start playing team sports, goal orientation and teamwork become even more pronounced: playing soccer is much more of a collective action than learning at school, which is practiced in a certain way. Children incorporate training scripts. As sport capabilities improve, increasingly complex sequences of physical interaction are systematically practiced, right up to maximum synchronicity (analyzable as part of the temporal practice dimension) at top speed and under competitive conditions.[16]

And just as people acquire scripts of restaurant through repeated practice, they also constantly experience similar constellations of being together. In this way, their (practical) knowledge of collectivity is differentiated. They experience differences between sharing meals with family, friends and colleagues/business partners, between

playing soccer, volleyball or handball, rehearsing in a punk band or an orchestra, decision-making contexts of hierarchically structured meetings or grassroots democratic assemblies, participating in a demonstration or a stadium concert.

The multidimensional approach to practice reveals how script knowledge relates to the various aspects of practice. Analyzing the interaction of the spatial, physical and thing/artefact dimensions, scripts can be understood to encompass knowledge about how objects like furniture need be placed and arranged, how to move and position oneself in different spaces (canteens, meeting rooms, at the table, on the playing field).[17] Adding the normative dimension to the analysis means looking for the material manifestation of asymmetries or hierarchies, who wears the captain's armband, sits at the head of a table, goes on a stage or to a lecture or conductor's podium. The latter examples can also be analyzed by combining the discursive and normative dimensions, touching upon the question of who may speak when, how and how much. Has someone taken the lead, do I have to indicate my willingness to speak by hand signal or is informal turn-taking employed like among friends, etc.? The temporal dimension plays a role in knowing when to gather (for breakfast at the daycare center, Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. for a jour fixe, etc.), the sequence of action (sitting down, eating, not getting up until everyone has finished; greeting, introduction, lecture/input, discussion; serve, bump, set, spike, block in volleyball), or the ability to achieve maximum coordinated simultaneity (in sports or music making).

Additionally, there are affective-emotional script elements such as coziness, exuberance, excitement or boredom. These increase and decrease, which can be analyzed as interrelating the affective-emotional with the temporal practice dimension. All of this is learnt (subjectivizing dimension) primarily by doing, in practice, by imitation or mimesis, but of course also through the normative interventions from experienced participants in the given practice (such as parents, educators, teachers, trainers, bosses). The schemata/frames of such participants and their roles, in the classical sense of behavioral expectations directed towards an actor category or a social position, is linked to these scripts, but extends beyond them. This is what the following is about.

4.2_Collectivity Themes: Stereotypes, Roles, Collectivity Stereotypes and Model

Role knowledge belongs to the second form of collectivization knowledge I am addressing, namely collectivity themes. They are more abstract than scripts because they refer to cross-situational knowledge: thus, being a coach does not refer to my soccer training; rather, as a category, it spans sports and diverse activities. The most prominent example of themes, however, is not roles, but stereotypes, which represent a more superficial knowledge structure. Like the concept of roles, stereotypes usually refer to social categories. However, there are also stereotypes of more interactive collectivities, such as family, groups of friends, teams, organizations to which I will refer to as 'collectivity stereotypes.' The concept 'collectivity models' designates the more complex kind of implicit knowledge that relates to interactive collectivities.[18]

Knowledge about social categories like gender, race, class, but also mothers, bosses, trainers, can be understood as the ability to construct commonalities such as salient externalities, social status, etc., whereby an anonymous multitude of people is "lumped"[19] together and thus differentiated from others. This (primary) commonality comes with ascribed secondary ones (e.g., behavioral expectations). Both commonalities are assumed to be related (e.g., causality, affinity).[20] Such schemata/frames refer to others, but also to myself (that is, they can be a form of self-categorization). I am aware of many of the external attributions concerning me, which makes me react to these attributions in some way (either confirming or resisting).[21]

These insights apply equally to stereotypes *and* roles. However, they differ gradually in terms of the complexity and density of knowledge. Stereotypes are more superficial, i.e., they come with fewer and less specific attributions, and often without any assumption about the relation between them and the primary commonality. For example, people may assume that members of some nations tend not to be punctual, but cannot really tell why. In contrast, role schemata/frames can encompass a multitude of practice/situation-specific behavioral expectations (how parents react to messy rooms, good grades, arguments with siblings), as well as the knowledge of variations within the category since parents, teachers, bosses, are not all the same.

Practice-theoretical or related research (e.g., the ethnomethodological strand of research on "doing gender"[22]) provides observations of how collectivity themes are performed in everyday life and illustrates the multidimensionality of practice. Such schemata/frames exist and are (re-)produced discursively in greetings, remarks,

stereotypical jokes or everyday theoretical explanations of behavior ("x does y because x belongs to the z, who tend to y"), but also through gestures, facial expressions and haptics (Bourdieu's hexis, i.e., the gender-coded sitting with crossed legs or wide-legged), use of artefacts (crucifixes, hijabs, lipstick), through separate spaces such as gendered toilets or in certain buildings, like churches, mosques, immigration authorities.[23] Bodies, movements, artefacts thus become markers that allow for self and social identification.[24] This kind of research may be further refined by numerous findings from psychological studies on the formation, activation, action relevance, maintenance, suppression and reduction of stereotypes[25]—and vice versa.

Collectivity themes do not only refer to social categories, but also to more interactive collectivities like family, teams, organizations. This is hardly surprising because on a linguistic level 'family' or 'organization' are categories, too. Again, these kinds of schemata/frames can be rather superficial (collectivity stereotypes) such as family as a place of security, the eleven friends soccer team, the bureaucratic authority. Or they can be more complex (collectivity models) depending on the kind of practice and—from the vantage point of the practitioners—the depth of their experience.

However, analyzing collectivity models is more intricate than analyzing stereotypes and role themes. Also, there is less empirical research on collectivity models: there are some contributions to the cultural model of marriage in cognitive anthropology,[26] some sociological studies on the framing of collective self-images in social movement research,[27] and quite a lot of cross-disciplinary research on family images. Only some of these studies address implicit knowledge, and most of them focus on verbal statements, including practice theory compatible research on families, though occasionally they examine artefacts like self-portrayal photos.[28] From a praxeological perspective there is a tendency to focus too much on the discursive dimension of practice—and not even on collectivization practices in the narrower sense (e.g., doing family), but on the practice of talking/giving an interview/discussing a (form of) collectivity.

Therefore, I restrict myself to four considerations that explore how collectivity models could operate as knowledge beyond the discursive dimension. Note that these considerations are largely transferable to stereotypes and role themes. Firstly, as implicit knowledge, collectivity stereotypes and models serve to contextualize. They

are part of the routine definition of a situation, which makes it possible, for example, to classify whether a meal, discussion or a decision is a family, friendly or business one. From an analytical observer's perspective, such schemata/frames help the practitioner to select context-appropriate scripts.

Secondly, the collectivity model knowledge takes place in dealing with boundaries: more informal ones, i.e., to which strangers are not permitted at the regulars' table, or else that no party conversations are started with people when they are busy arguing with their partners. There are also more formal ones, such as logging in at the gym or company premises. The collectivity themes are therefore "useful to identify patterns of accessibility within the plane of practices."[29]

Thirdly, collectivity models connect the many individual practices that (re-)produce collectivity in the manner of a "general understanding,"[30] regardless of whether they are focused (collectivization practices in the narrower sense) or not. In this sense, a collectivity model could be characterized as the diffuse, implicit knowledge that living, eating, traveling together, arguing, taking photos, and the various forms of care practices belong to the family; that writing this text, teaching, the activities of students, facility management, library and personnel administration have to do with the university; that public viewing of an international soccer match, presenting my passport, the President's speech, the use of pronouns like "we" and "they" in the media and everyday conversation, refer to the nation.[31]

Fourth consideration: As Anderson has indicated, while small groups can still be experienced in their entirety in practices, this is no longer the case with medium-sized organizations, let alone corporations, social movements or nations. Collective models are therefore related in different ways to what sociology of knowledge would call "konjunktive Erfahrungsräume" [experiential spaces].[32] These spaces can be based on shared experiences (e.g., family), on structurally identical experiences (e.g., class) or on propositions and fictitious or imaginary spaces of experience, (e.g., a nation). The latter ones are represented, stabilized, legitimized, emotionally charged and ultimately anchored in implicit knowledge through practices involving symbols (names, flags, logos, representatives), metaphors (talking about "national pride"), narratives and myths. These practices function in the broadest sense according to the logic of Durkheim's rituals from his sociology of religion.[33] They depict the imaginary of collective identification, through hero myths, whether in the form of national

liberation struggles, the garage years of the founding CEO of a tech company or the remarkable protest that allegedly triggered a social movement. The most prominent element of a collective imaginary is its idea of unity that runs contrary to its actual heterogeneity.[34] Nevertheless, such imaginaries underly all forms of collectivity, including families, albeit the extent to which collectivities are dependent on the representation of their imaginary unity varies. Collectivity themes, as categories that connect many practices, carry such ideas of unity.

Thus, collectivity themes exist in the execution of numerous practices (including their scripts) and must be analyzed in a multidimensional way. Analogous to classical stereotypes, collectivity models are embodied by a wide variety of material and symbolic cues that are integral to various practices (such as jerseys, letterheads, gestures, body language, buildings, spatial delimitation of the public and private).[35] The operation of such knowledge may especially become apparent in multicollective situations, i.e., when different themes intersect (e.g., when my friends, colleagues and family members are present at the same party) or in crisis situations, such as divorce.

When it comes to the acquisition of themes, the classic idea of subjectivation can be applied (cf. sections 3., 4.1.). People become a member of a social category through repeated interpellation and being disciplined in collectivization practices, i.e., through category-related assimilation and differentiation processes such as the incorporation of professional or gender habitus, the physical disciplining of athletes.[36] At the same time, other participants in a given practice (e.g., parents, teachers) exert a subjectivizing effect on me (and on themselves; and I on them). Thus, I also acquire knowledge about their category and practice position. The same applies to my subjectivation as a member of a family, school class, team or organization. Both the subjectivation as a member of a gender category and as a family member are intertwined (cf. section 4.3). Furthermore, as schema theory points out, the more abstract schemata/frames are also conveyed by sources other than direct experience with the object itself. We acquire stereotypes about members of social categories as well as knowledge about family, circles of friends and work teams through the consumption of novels, guides, blogs, films and series. Consequently, we know something about collectivities that we have never been members of (in my case, women, gangs, spaceship crews).[37] Collectivity themes, thus, as general

understandings emerge from the interplay of everyday practices with the representations of those very practices.[38]

4.3_Entanglement of Collectivization Cultures

Not reifying collectivity means thinking of it as processual and open. Due to their openness, collectivities or collectivization practices are always entangled with other collectivities or collectivization practices—as well as the cultures (schemata/frames) that accompany them. The complexity and interconnectedness of collectivization cultures has been indicated several times. For instance, collective models of the family are entangled with role themes of mothers, fathers, daughters and sons as well as scripts from everyday family life. These schemata/frames are also closely intertwined with those of gender, generation and age: the manner in which motherhood/fatherhood is practiced is linked to gender images. Knowledge of age and generational differences is embedded in the relationship between (grand-)parents and (grand-)children. This interconnectedness is expressed in terms such as grandma, which combines gender, age and family position.[39] In a similar manner, knowledge about organizations of a certain size interweaves collective models (of departments, teams, etc.), stereotypes and role themes (e.g., about bosses, engineers, accountants) and scripts (e.g., meetings, etc.). What I have separated analytically above is actually connected, sometimes to the point of conceptual necessity (Catholics are necessarily also Christians).

Practices of non-members are also co-constitutive. A parental theme, for example, is not only fed by the interaction of children with their own parents, but also by exchange within the peer group about how annoying, embarrassing or absent parents can be. The (re-)production of family also encompasses the practices of church representatives (marrying, baptizing), public authority employees (approving parental allowance, providing youth welfare), educators and teachers, doctors and therapists as well as the reception of the above-mentioned representations in novels, films, guidebooks and blogs.[40] Furthermore, non-family-specific practices may be entangled too: mothers suggest brainstorming techniques that they practice in work teams when making a joint family decision about the next vacation; fathers tell stereotypical, racist jokes they heard at sports training over dinner. Children internalize these; or

reprimand their fathers because racism and stereotypes have been addressed in schools.

From a collectivity perspective, entanglement means that we as multicollective beings import our collectivity schemata/frames into the various collectivities to which we belong: sometimes latently, sometimes actively; sometimes synchronically, sometimes diachronically; sometimes based on experiences with different forms of collectivity (e.g., as a woman, immigrant; from family, work team), sometimes on those with the same forms (e.g., my soccer team in Giessen and my next soccer team after having moved to Regensburg).[41] From a praxeological perspective, this means that people participate in different collectivization practices, and execute many of them multiple times.[42] Multiple collectivization and subjectivation turns the practitioners into interweavers of practices and carriers of multiple schemata/frames. How these elements of knowledge interact is considered a desideratum of praxeological research.[43] Studies examining the efficacy of grassroots democratic decision-making reveal that adverse interferences can emerge when people are used to different manners of collective discussion and decision-making (e.g., hierarchically within political parties, companies). They would react, for example with impatience or by trying to re-hierarchize the decision making procedure.[44]

However, entanglement is not merely the consequence of more or less random interaction. The construction of poly-collective collectivities[45] requires interlinking practices.[46] Telephone conferences, video meetings, general assemblies, etc. bring together representatives of local action groups of social movements, or various departments or project teams of an organization. International match broadcasts not only showcase the activities of a team (whose national representativeness is discussed on the basis of the 'multiculturality' of the players), but also the crowd in the stadium (whose enthusiasm is related to the nation) and possibly public viewing sites from several cities (which buttresses the idea that these places belong together, as well as that an individual belongs with many unknown others who do, feel and desire the same: victory for 'their' team).[47] The collectivity schemata/frames of such practices not only connect individual practices, but also (re-)produce schemata/frames of collective entanglement (e.g., action groups, protest masses; departments, work teams, production sites; cities, genders, classes, etc.).

Perhaps the most knowledge-specific form of entanglement is found in comparisons between forms of collectivity or metaphors and analogies.[48] For instance, understandings of family are usually formed in comparison to ideas of marriage or friendship. We look for familiarity in friendship, friendship in work teams, we interpellate companies or nations as family, the board of a political party as the crew of a ship and heads of state as father figures.[49] Of course, many interpellations take place as explicit staging (e.g., an organization represented as a family in holiday addresses of company heads to their employees), but others (e.g., the imagining families as partnerships) can very well feed the implicit knowledge (schemata/frames). Such interdependencies can also reveal the creative potential of the imaginary: imagining collectivity differently.[50]

5_Conclusion

While collectivities are often conceived as entities that produce culture (thesis 1), in this _Essay I have conceptualized them praxeologically as cultural products (thesis 2). Collectivity is something we practice. Collectivization practices can be analyzed multidimensionally (in terms of physicality, temporality, spatiality, etc.), one of these dimensions being practice-constitutive implicit knowledge/culture, consisting of schemata/frames (collectivization cultures). In this sense, all collectivities are imagined communities. Therefore, research on schemata/frames can and should be extended to all kinds of collectivities.

Praxeologists emphasize the implicitness, corporeality, procedurality and complexity of practice knowledge. For the sake of analytical differentiation, I have proposed to draw on theories of schemata/frames to distinguish between two forms of collectivization cultures: collectivization scripts, i.e., schemata/frames about how collectivizing practices are performed, and the more abstract collectivity themes, which are located at the categorical level of knowledge. They can refer to social categories (e.g., gender, race, mothers, bosses) or to interactive collectivities (e.g., families, teams, organizations, social movements). Depending on the specific practice, this knowledge can manifest itself as more superficial (stereotypes) or complex (role themes, collectivity models). Collectivity themes contextualize scripts, enable people to assess whether they are allowed to participate in practices, connect numerous individual practices as general background knowledge (which I have

termed general understanding) and encompass imaginary ideas of unity. While practitioners acquire scripts through collectivization performance, collectivity themes also circulate in discursive and representational practices (e.g., education, training, discussions, therapies, media consumption). Either way, it is learning by doing, multiple subjectivation through participation in various collectivizing practices. Collectivization schemata/frames (thesis 2) are therefore also passed on through collectivization in the sense of thesis 1. These two theses are ultimately intertwined.

Collectivization practices and their schemata/frames are entangled (a family model with role themes on parents, gender and generational stereotypes and various everyday scripts). Essential to entanglement is the multicollectivity of the actors, who bring their experiences as category and organization members and through exchange with their families, peers and teams into the execution of various collectivization practices. They are compared with each other, related to each other through analogies or metaphors (e.g., company or nation as family). It is precisely in such representations that the imaginary is revealed, sometimes in the sense of stabilizing ideas of unity that belie the heterogeneity of the collective, sometimes as a source for alternative ideas of collectivization.

The findings presented are merely a rudimentary conceptual step that utilizes only two theoretical resources and applies them in a fragmentary manner. Nor have I addressed the issue of "undoing," increasingly under discussion in recent years,[51] or touched upon the question of whether and how collectivization innovations and ideologies could be thought within the framework of practice theory. Finally, only empirical research can ascertain the value of such analytical endeavor.

_Endnotes

1   This is a shortened version of the German article: Jan-Christoph Marschelke, "Von *imagined communities* zu Kollektivierungskulturen: Kollektivvorstellungen zwischen Praxeologie, Schematheorie und Wissenssoziologie," *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Kollektivwissenschaft* 10, no. 2 (2024): 75–115, DOI: 10.14361/zkkw-2024-100204. Reuse in English with kind permission by transcript 2025.

2   Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation* (Frankfurt, Main: Campus, 2005).

3   Comparably successful has been the idea of the bureaucratic organization.

4   See also Jan-Christoph Marschelke, "Doing Collectivity: Eine praxeologische Annäherung an Kollektivität," in *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Kollektivwissenschaft* 5, no. 1 (2019): 79–113; Jan-

Christoph Marschelke, "Doing Collectivity, Doing Normativity: Connecting Collectivity and Normativity via Practice Theory," in *Communities and the(ir) Law*, eds. Werner Gebhart and Daniel Witte (Frankfurt, Main: Klostermann, 2023), 103–29.

5   Cf. e.g. Heike Delitz, "'There is no such thing…': Zur Kritik an Kollektivbegriffen in der Soziologie," *Mittelweg* 36 (2020): 160–83.

6   I will use practice theory interchangeably with praxeology or praxeological approach.

7   Marschelke, "Doing Collectivity," 106–108; cf. also Karin Jurczyk, "UnDoing Family: Zentrale konzeptuelle Annahmen, Feinjustierungen und Erweiterungen," in *Doing and Undoing Family: Konzeptionelle und empirische Entwicklungen*, ed. Karin Jurczyk (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2020), 26–54, here: 36 ff.

8   Andreas Reckwitz, "Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken: Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive,"*Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32, no. 4 (2003): 282–301.

9   The following is taken from Reckwitz, *Grundelemente*, 290–292; Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2012): 577; Boike Rehbein, *Die Soziologie Pierre Bourdieus* (Konstanz: UVK, 2011), here: ch. 3.1 and 3.2.

10   Reckwitz identifies the use of such concepts in the analysis of implicit knowledge both in more structuralist and phenomenological positions, see Reckwitz, *Transformation*. *Deutungsmuster* [interpretation pattern] would be the term preferably used by phenomenologist approaches after Schuetz.

11   Reckwitz, *Transformation*, 567–568.

12   Pierre Bourdieu, *Meditationen: Zur Kritik der scholastischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), here: 177.

13   The following is taken from Mark-Oliver Carl, *Kontextualisierungen literarischer Texte durch fortgeschrittene Lernende: Eine Laut-Denk-Studie zu drei Kurzprosatexten der 1940er-Jahre* (Frankfurt, Main: Peter Lang, 2023), here: 30–32, 317–319; Sven Strasen and Mark-Oliver Carl, Kollektive, "Kultur und Kognition Überlegungen zur wechselseitigen Anschlussfähigkeit von Kollektivparadigma und kognitiver Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft," *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Kollektivwissenschaft* 10, no. 2 (2024): 47–74.

14   On practice theory and subjectivation see especially Thomas Alkemeyer, Nikolaus Buschmann, and Michael Michaeler, "Kritik der Praxis: Plädoyer für eine subjektivierungstheoretische Erweiterung der Praxistheorien," in *Praxis denken: Konzepte und Kritik*, eds. Thomas Alkemeyer, Volker Schürmann and Jörg Volbers (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2015), here: 25–50; Thomas Alkemeyer and Nikolaus Buschmann, "Learning in and Across Practices: Enablement as Subjectivation," in *The Nexus of Practices*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 8–23.

15   Thomas Alkemeyer and Ulrich Bröckling, "Jenseits des Individuums: Zur Subjektivierung kollektiver Subjekte. Ein Forschungsprogramm," in *Jenseits der Person: Zur Subjektivierung von Kollektiven*, eds. Thomas Alkemeyer, Ulrich Bröckling, and Tobias Peters (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 17–31, here: 28.

16   See e.g. Michael Michaeler, "Subjektivierung eines Volleyballteams als spielfähiger Kollektivkörper," *Jenseits der Person: Zur Subjektivierung von Kollektiven*, eds. Thomas Alkemeyer, Ulrich Bröckling, and Tobias Peters (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 295–314; Kristina Brümmer, "Kollektivität als konzertierte Praxis: Zur Ausformung von Mit- und Zusammenspielfähigkeit im Teamsport," *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Kollektivwissenschaft* 10, no. 2 (2024), 117–152.

17 For 'furniture regime' in empirical studies compatible with practice theory see e.g. Kathrin Audehm and Jörg Zirfas, "Performative Gemeinschaften: Zur Bildung der Familie durch Rituale," *Sozialer Sinn* 1 (2000): 29–50; Robert Schmidt, *Soziologie der Praktiken: Konzeptionelle Studien und empirische Analysen* (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 2012).

18 In reference to the alternative to the concept of theme, the "cultural model."

19 Eviatar Zerubavel, "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification," *Sociological Forum* 11, no. 3 (1996): 421–433.

20 Vgl. Klaus P. Hansen, *Das Paradigma Kollektiv: Neue Einsichten in Vergesellschaftung und das Wesen des Sozialen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022), 77–79.

21 Stefan Hirschauer, "Menschen unterscheiden: Grundlinien einer Theorie der Humandifferenzierung," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 50, no. 3–4 (2021): 155–174, here: 164–165.

22 For an overview, see e.g. Regin Gildemeister, "Doing Gender: eine mikrotheoretische Annäherung an die Kategorie Geschlecht," in *Handbuch Interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung*, eds. Beate Kortendiek, Birgit Riegraf, and Katja Sabisch (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 409–417.

23 See for these (and other) instructive examples and in depth analysis Paula-Irene Villa, *Sexy Bodies: Eine soziologische Reise durch den Geschlechtskörper* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), as well as Hirschauer, *Menschen unterscheiden*.

24 Hirschauer, *Menschen unterscheiden*, 160.

25 E.g., Lars-Eric Peterson and Bernd Six, *Stereotype, Vorurteile und soziale Diskriminierung: Theorien, Befunde und Interventionen* (Weinheim: Beltz , 2020).

26 Claudia Strauss and Naomi A. Quinn, *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 140–142.

27 See e.g., Petra Bauer and Christine Wiezorek, ed., *Familienbilder zwischen Kontinuität und Wandel* (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2017). Heiko Beyer and Annette Schnabel, *Theorien sozialer Bewegungen* (Frankfurt, Main: Campus, 2017), 152–154, especially 166–168.

28 E.g., Thassilo Hazod, *Familienbilder: Aushandlungen von Familie in Foto-Interviews mit Wiener Romnija und Roma* (Wien: Verlag des Instituts für Europäische Ethnologie, 2019).

29 Allison Hui, "Variation and the Intersection of Practices," in *The Nexus of Practices*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 52–67, here: 65.

30 Daniel Welch and Alan Warde, "How Should We Understand 'General Understandings'," in *The Nexus of Practices*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 183–96, here: 183.

31 See for these examples e.g. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 1995); Sven Ismer, "Von der imaginierten zur emotional erlebten Nation: Partizipation und Verschmelzung in der Fußballberichterstattung," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 39 (2014): 131–151.

32 Cf. Ralf Bohnsack, *Praxeologische Wissenssoziologie* (Opladen: Budrich, 2017), 176–177, 216–218.

33 E.g., media rituals as in Ismer, *Von der imaginierten zur emotional erlebten Nation*, or, even more generalized and on all levels, "interaction chain rituals," see Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

34 Heike Delitz, *Kollektive Identitäten* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), e.g. 16–17.

35 On the readability of practices thanks to the symbolic dimension of their materiality, see Frank Hillebrandt, *Soziologische Praxistheorien: Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), ch.

4.4.

[36]   Hirschauer, *Menschen unterscheiden*, 160.

[37]   The concept of subjectivation is not as clearly applicable to the acquisition of knowledge as in the case of actual memberships, but it can also be used here. In essence, subjectivation is, on the one hand, the use of media that makes one a tablet user and streaming consumer. On the other hand, the content exerts a subjectivizing effect by affecting and positioning them in some way. Thus, a rock band documentary evokes longing (affective dimension), a series about a gang affirms my secure bourgeois position or a family sitcom humorously confronts me with everyday crises that seem familiar to me.

[38]   Welch and Warde, *How Should We Understand*, 191.

[39]   Stefan Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences: Die Kontingenz sozialer Zugehörigkeiten," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 43, no. 3 (2014): 170–191, here: 184.

[40]   C.f Hui, *Variation*, 67; Jurczyk, *UnDoing Family*, 43 speaks of the co-constructors of families.

[41]   Marschelke, *Doing Collectivity, Doing Normativity*, 123–125. Synchronous means that collectivity memberships exist simultaneously, diachronic means that one begins after another has already ended.

[42]   The level of individual participation in a practice should not be confused with the level of the practice as a whole. Interferences at the practice level ultimately result from the fact that participants in practice A repeatedly take part in practice B as well. The fact that a few members of field hockey teams are also members of choirs does not mean there is a systematic entanglement between field hockey games and choral singing.

[43]   Hui, *Variation*, 60.

[44]   Jan-Christoph Marschelke, "Konvivialere Menschen für konvivialere Kollektive—und umgekehrt: Über den Nexus von konvivialistischer Subjektivierung und Kollektivierung," *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Kollektivwissenschaft* 9, no. 2 (2023): 81–112.

[45]   See Hansen, *Paradigma Kollektiv*, 124–125, who distinguishes planned poly-collectivities (e.g., a company) from unplanned ones (such as a nation).

[46]   Cf. Davide Nicolini, "Is Small the Only Beautiful? Making Sense of 'Large Phenomena' From a Practice-based Perspective," in *The Nexus of Practices*, eds. Allison Hui, Theodore Schatzki, and Elizabeth Shove (London: Routledge, 2017), 98–113, here: 108.

[47]   Ismer, *Von der imaginierten zu emotional erlebten Nation*.

[48]   See Marschelke, *Doing Collectivity*, 103.

[49]   Examples are taken from Andreas Reckwitz, "Praktiken und Diskurse: Eine sozialtheoretische und metho-dologische Relation," in *Theoretische Empirie: Zur Relevanz qualitativer Forschung*, eds. Herbert Kalthoff, Stefan Hirschauer and Gesa Lindemann (Frankfurt, Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 188–209, here: 206–207. Felix Heidenreich, "Das individuelle Leben und das Gemeinwesen als Baustelle: Zu einer Leitmetapher zeitgenössischer Subjektivierung," in *Jenseits der Person: Zur Subjektivierung von Kollektiven*, eds. Thomas Alkemeyer, Ulrich Bröckling, and Tobias Peters (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018),53–71; Ronald Hartz, "We Are Family? Anrufungen organisationaler Gemeinschaft zwischen Unterwerfung und Emanzipation," in *Jenseits der Person: Zur Subjektivierung von Kollektiven*, eds. Thomas Alkemeyer, Ulrich Bröckling, and Tobias Peters (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 195–215.

[50]   Anjes Tjarks, *Familienbilder gleich Weltbilder: Wie familiäre Metaphern unser politisches Denken und Handeln bestimmen* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2011), 49.

[51]   Stefan Hirschauer, "Undoing Differences Revisited: Unterscheidungsnegation und Indifferenz in der Humandifferenzierung," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 49, no. 5–6 (2020): 318–34; Karin Jurczyk, *UnDoing Family*, 26–28.